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HARDLINER EBRAHIM RAISI WINS IRAN PRESIDENCY

Iran's hard-line judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi, won a landslide victory on Saturday in the country's Presidential election, a vote that both propelled the supreme leader's protege into Tehran's highest civilian position and saw the lowest turnout in the Islamic Republic's history. The election of Raisi became more of a coronation after his strongest competition found themselves disqualified from running. **PTI**

Businesses can open till 5 pm from Monday

Govt buses, Metro allowed to run with 50% seating

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister BS Yediyurappa on Saturday announced further relaxation in Covid restrictions that will come into effect from Monday in 16 districts, which have a case positivity rate of below 5 per cent.

Bengaluru Urban, Mandya, Belagavi and Kalaburagi are among the districts that will see relaxed norms. Here, shops and offices can open till 5 pm, but with 50 per cent staff. Hotels, clubs and restaurants can have 50 per cent customers and should shut by 5 pm. They cannot serve liquor or switch on the AC. Government-run buses and Metro can run with 50 per cent seating capacity. Sports events can be held without an audience. **P4**

WHAT IS ALLOWED

Commercial establishments till 5 pm

Hotels, clubs and restaurants, with 50% capacity; However, serving liquor and using air-conditioner are prohibited | Resorts and lodges

Gyms, without AC

Buses and Metro, with 50% occupancy

CURFEW ACROSS STATE

Weekdays: Curbs will be in force from 7 pm to 5 am the following morning

Weekends: Restrictions will be in force from 7 pm on Friday to 5 am on Monday

With relaxation in curbs, travellers arrive at the Krantivira Sangolli Rayanna Railway Station in Bengaluru on Saturday | ASHISHKUMAR SHEN

INTERVIEW

'PREPARE FOR THIRD WAVE ANYTIME AFTER SEPT'

Even as the number of Covid-19 cases is gradually on the decline, the second wave is not over yet, **Dr Devi Shetty**, cardiac surgeon and Founder, Chairman of Narayana Health, tells The New Sunday Express. "We should be prepared for the third wave anytime after September," he said. **P4**

VACCINE FOR CHILDREN MAY GET NOD IN 10 DAYS

Belagavi: The country's first Covid vaccine for children aged between 12 and 18 -- ZyCoV-D -- has been sent for emergency approval to the Drug Controller General of India after the clinical trials ended in all the centres in the country. DCGI is expected to give its nod in the next 8-10 days. **P4**

HIGH NUMBER OF KIDS INFECTED IN MYSURU DIST

Mysuru: There has been an alarming increase in the number of children getting infected with Covid in Mysuru district. Between June 9 and 18, 769 children below the age of 18 have tested positive. Of them, 301 are in the 0-10 year age group. Mysuru saw over 7,600 cases in the last ten days. **P4**

'THIRD WAVE IN 6-8 WEEKS IF NORMS NOT FOLLOWED'

New Delhi: If Covid-appropriate behaviour is not followed, the next wave can strike the country in the next 6-8 weeks, AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria warned on Saturday, stressing on the need for stricter surveillance and area-specific lockdowns in case of a significant surge. **P9**

Modi's trusted aide elevated as BJP's vice-president in UP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Lucknow/New Delhi

ENDING speculation on former bureaucrat **A K Sharma's** induction into the Yogi Adityanath cabinet in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP's UP unit appointed him as its vice-president on Saturday.

Sharma's appointment, with the crucial Assembly election just eight months away, is seen as an attempt to both bolstering the party's reach among the upper caste in eastern UP and executing the leadership's poll strategies in the state. Sharma, who joined the party five months ago and was elected as an MLC shortly afterwards, is close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He played a key role in managing the Covid situation in PM Modi's constituency Varanasi. The Varanasi Model of Covid-19 management has been appreciated by the PM on multiple occasions.

His elevation was among a flurry of organisational appointments made by party's UP unit president Swatantra Dev Singh, hours after he met BJP president J P Nadda and national general secretary B L Santhosh in New Delhi.

Sharma's appointment comes weeks after the leadership sent a two-member team, comprising Santhosh and former Union minister Radha Mohan Singh, to review party's organisational strength ahead of the crucial Assembly election. The visit was followed by Yogi landing in New Delhi to hold meetings with Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Nadda. Speculation was rife that Sharma would be given a high-ranking position in UP cabinet, a scenario Yogi was opposed to, fearing it would lead to dual power centres, sources said. A 1988-batch IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre, Sharma is a Bhumihar Brahmin, a community with sizeable influence in eastern UP's Varanasi, Azamgarh, Ghazipur and other districts.

TOP LEADER TO VISIT LUCKNOW

With BJP keen on setting its house in order ahead of the Assembly election next year, party's national general secretary B L Santhosh would land in Lucknow for the second time this month. The June 21 and 22 visit may be precursor to more organisational rejig, sources said

NATIONWIDE	JUNE 18	JUNE 19
Fresh cases	62,480	60,753
Recoveries	88,977	97,743
Deaths	1,587	1,647

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

June 18: **29,84,172 doses**

June 19: **33,00,085 doses**

TOTAL DOSES: 27,23,88,783

KARNATAKA	JUNE 18	JUNE 19
Fresh cases	5,783	5,815
Recoveries	15,290	11,832
Deaths	168	161

WITH THIS ISSUE

EXPRES READ

Induction of Rafale into IAF by 2022, says chief

Hyderabad: Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria on Saturday said that the induction of 36 Rafale aircraft into the Indian Air Force would take place by 2022. The IAF is absolutely on target with respect to the Rafale induction plan, he said, while responding to a reporter's query here, on the timeline for receiving all the 36 fighter jets from France. **P7**

J&K statehood buzz as PM calls all-party meet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Srinagar / New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will chair an all-party meeting with at least 14 politicians from Jammu and Kashmir, including four former chief ministers and four deputy CMs, in the national capital on June 24, triggering speculation that restoration of statehood is on the cards.

The move comes weeks before the second anniversary of scrapping of J&K's special status and its bifurcation into two Union Territories. According to sources, the meeting's agenda also includes delimitation process and elections.

According to sources in Srinagar, PDP chief and former J&K CM Mehbooba Mufti was the first to receive the invitation. She has convened a meeting of the party's Political Affairs Committee in Srinagar on Sunday to decide whether to participate. As a goodwill gesture, the government on Saturday released Mehbooba's maternal uncle Sartaj Madni, who was under detention for nearly six months.

Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah of the National Conference, and senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad are the other three former CMs invited. Union Home minister Amit Shah will also attend the meeting, the first such exercise since the Centre abrogated J&K's special status.

Political commentator Noor Mohammad Baba said the Centre is under pressure to soften its Kashmir policy due to both internal and external factors. "There are more strategic factors. Kashmir is not like any other place in India. It is being watched. The UN agencies are also keeping an eye on the situation," he said.

Name sports awards after Milkha Singh

ASHOK KUMAR

I knew the legendary Milkha Singh personally because of my father, Major Dhyan Chand. Every time we met, he would enquire about his health. We had a practice camp in Chandigarh before the 1975 World Cup, which we won. Being an official of the Punjab Sports Department, Milkha sir would often visit us. He was a man of few words, but ensured we got the best of facilities.

One day he invited a few senior players for lunch. I was one of them. Given his keen eye on dining table etiquettes, we all had to use forks and knives. Most of us were not habituated to this, especially me. I somehow managed, without getting noticed. Age difference and his seniority mea nt we interacted formally on most occasions.

Most of our conversations centred on my father, who used to address him as 'Milkhe'. The demise of Milkha sir saddens me. He and Balbir Singh Sr were the pillars of Indian sports after Independence. Unfortunately, we lost both in a short span of time. It's time we gave them the recognition they deserve. We should name national sports awards after them. These legends inspired generations of athletes.

The writer, a former India hockey captain and World Cup winner, spoke to Firoz Mirza

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